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R.B. Forsyth

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ROBERT B. FORSYTH
1945

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FIBRES OF FLAX

PROEM

To contribute something of interest to the current output, to record though briefly the splendid work by Canadian soldier and civilian in the war effort, and to extend felicitations of the season to my friends; these are a few of the writer's aims in publishing this fragment. If I have succeeded in doing this, I shall feel amply repaid.

The Author.

R.B.F.
307 - 20th Ave. West
Calgary, Alberta

W. H. Mrs Sage



Cordially yours.

CHRISTMAS
1945

R. B. Forsyth

BELLS OF VICTORY

Glad bells of Victory, peal out your message
Far over land and sea and mountain weir.
Till every clime of earth's remotest nation
Has heard your joyous song so shrill and clear.

The Hour of Sacrifice has turned to triumph,
The Hour of Waiting linked with Hour of Prayer,
Rising from every rood of British steading
Pledged were our lives to sea and land and air.

Stemmed now the spate of thrice-cold Nazi fury,
Its greed, its hate, steeped in unnumbered wrong
Inflicted on the weaker suffering nation
To some far-off Dark Age such deeds belong.

Onward we go to free our struggling brethren,
Shoulder to shoulder, with black Error flown,
Our loyalties, our prayers, are not forgotten
And out of Discord Harmony is sown.

SACRISTY

Swiftly the gathering shadows round me close
Speaking of other days forever gone,
Filled is the twilight with an incense sweet
As of the mignonette from dewy lawn.

Here bric-a-brac and burnished brasses shine,
These household gods he left at country's call
(And now reported "Missing", lad of mine),
Baptismal font of pain. Unscanted fall
Tears, bitter tears, dimly enshrouding all.

Moves on the long night with the silent hours;
I thank Thee, God, for tokens such as they,
Sweet hallowed memories like freshening showers
Dim Sacristy of Faith upon life's twilit way.

August, 1942.

CANADIAN SOLDIER

Here's to the stalwart Canadian, ever his country's pride,
Recking not of danger, all thought of self aside,
Glorying in stern action, counting never the cost,
Johnny Canuck, we salute you, bravest when all seems lost.

Caen or Dunkirk - remember where our heroes fought and died,
Harried by panzer and stuka, still you danger defied,
Crowned with the laurel of victory, cypress we cast aside,
Gladly we salute you, ever our country's pride.

TO ENGLAND

O Hour of Sacrifice and Liberation,
Your challenge peals its message loud and clear
To many a weak and long-oppressed nation,
Till hill and valley echo cheer on cheer;
Your heritage of old preserved untarnished
To the sweet incense of soft-breathed prayer.

Once more the faith regained in world-torn battle
Attests your love of freedom dearly won,
The hopes and fears of many a hard-pressed people
Centres in you, O England, as the sun
Rising in high, bejewelled splendor,
From out encircling clouds O Glorious Light - Shine On.

AS RUN THE YEARS

**Forsan et haec olim meminisse juvabit.*

- I. In-serried ranks the bristling foemen stood,
Sea-rovers all in dread array,
Patient, the Good King Alfred eyed the horde,
Waiting the impact of that stern affray.
- II. Shrilled clear the clarion horn:
Then twanged the bows while countless arrows sped;
Surprised, the Viking wedge reeled where it stood.
Filled with stark fear was mighty Guthrum then
As he beheld the dint of shattering arrow-wood
Upon his ceorls, and knights, and hapless men—
Then "On to the attack," he cried—a hope forlorn.
- III. Again with clash of shield and angry shout
The heathen force rolled on,
Surging like mountainous seas: quick raven's food
When English hillmen bold with battle cry
Of "Alfred for Wessex our all-champion he."
While English shafts flew like hail in darkening wood.
- IV. And what an hour was this for scop or noble gleeman
High battle din, the clash of shield and spear,
The tortured arrow straining at the yew,
Until the field of Ethandune ran red both far and near;
And what an hour for England's lusty freeman
Battling for life and liberty that men hold dear
'Gainst Viking brood who bested turn in panicked fear.
- V. So Wessex weald was free,
Tamed was the loutish beast that wrought us woe;
"Ascribe all honor to our King,
Bulwark of God," we cried;
"Scathless, fair Alfred has rolled back the foe."
* * *
Thus broke a fair new Day o'er English wold.
* * *
- VI. A thousand years are but as yester-morn:
Beaten, the Hunnish hordes dissolve in flight.
Thanks to our God, our King, and yeomen worth—
Upraise the cry:
'God and the Right have won';
In-travail sore a Fair New Day is born.

May, 1944. * Perchance it may please you to recall.

THE CONQUEROR

Yet once again the dainty ribboned blue-grass
Sends forth to Southern fields in quiet air
Its silvery shoots to reach aloft at evening.
Born, born of yesterday, so fine and fair.

Wave o'er him tenderly
The long day's done,
Night of warfare ended
And battle won.

Empty the chair by the lonely fireside.
War's drums are stilled and the hard field won.
Sleep on, Brave Heart, thy war-torn body
Proclaims thee Victor; Chieftain, well done.

Rest to the Soldier,
To the Chieftain, home.
Peace be thy guerdon now
Long rest and Home.

SHE WALKS IN BEAUTY

(To the Red Cross)

Symbol of Faith and Truth and glorious Light,
And kindly deeds to needy far and near.
Offering her largesse without stint or fear.
She stands attired in robes of purest white.
She "walks in Beauty" dowered with lovely ways,
And dries the eye o'ershadowed by Life's frown;
She surely merits meed of fair renown
Through calm self-sacrifice in length of days.

Small children stretch their eager thin-veined hands
To grasp the hem of that loose-flowing robe;
Hers is no selfish thought or base design:
The wounded, the interned, acclaim her worth;
Her kindness felt throughout the entire globe
Will burgeon ever in her deeds benign.

FOR THINE IS THE POWER

Oh bells of joy peal out
Your message far and near;
Peace and good-will return to men,
And love supreme is here.

Sing for the night is past,
Sing for the Day dawns clear,
Through dark clouds overcast
See, the New Day is here.

Sing, for deliverance comes,
Not unheralded by fear,
Peace and good-will return---
O sing, for the glad New Year.

Christ, the great Victor comes,
Though war-clouds threaten sore
Comes to regain His own---
Triumphant evermore.

FOREVER BRIGHT

"And their name shall endure forevermore."

Forever bright. Long may their name endure,
Sons of the farm and plain and wooded hill,
For these have died to win unstained for us
A heritage of faith and honor pure.

Still with the rolling years forever twined,
Their name shall cherished be by tongue unborn,
Which lauds not thoughtlessly such noble past,
Undimmed through days and still untarnished find.

HERALDS OF EMPIRE

Just where the sluggish Thompson outward curves,
Stands a green cottage framed with poplar grove;
Supine at noon the current idly swerves,
While sand-bars dim mark where explorers strove.
Strove to unleash the secrets of these hills
In days long-gone, from these far northern wilds;
While willows drooping marked the paths they trod
Beyond the shallows and the megrimed flats
Out to bare hills that lift their heads to God.

Though scanty verdure crowns these rolling flanks
Beyond ever Beyond some brave hearts plunged
Through torrents wild, and debris-littered banks.
Heralds of Empire, soul-inspired to find
Vast realms untrod—as those that search the Mind.

NOCTURNE

Slowly the night wind dies
With plaintive moan;
And Night with darkened eyes
Ascends her throne.

Her realm is vast;
Bejewelled, sandal-shod,
She lifts pale face in prayer
To Earth's great God.

Then soft her censer swings
With incense rare;
Priestess sublime is she
With offering fair.

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